Interspecies

Fall 2004

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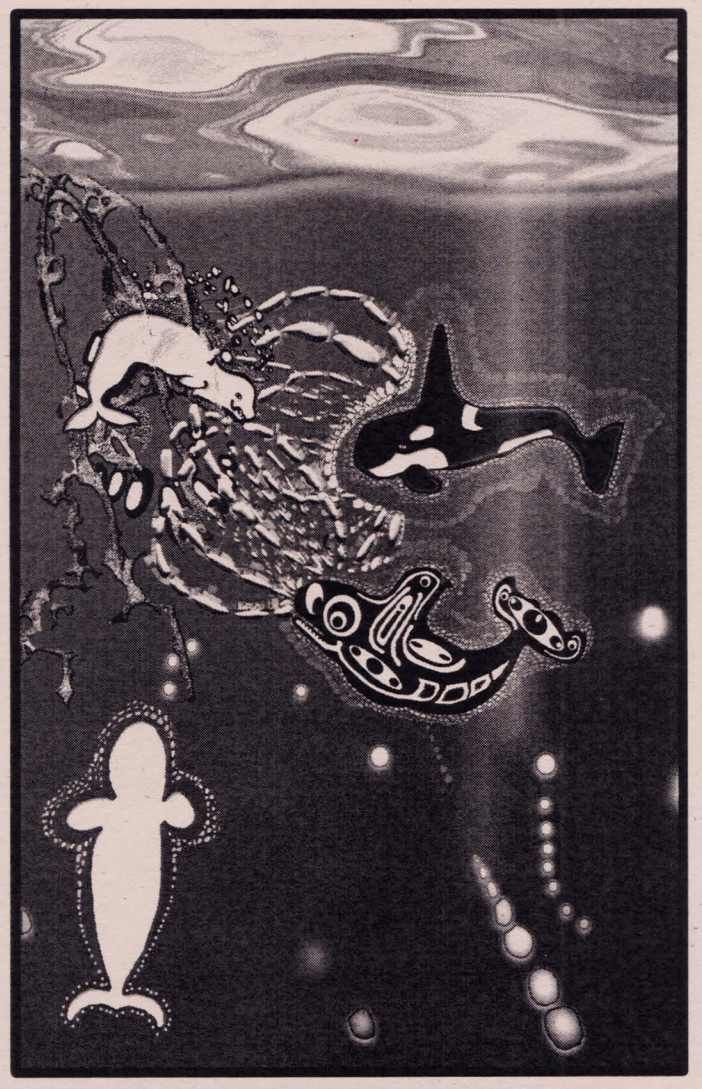
Interspecies News

One:

After a period of relative inactivity, the Interspecies is becoming quite busy, as we produce new projects in the USA, Japan, and northern Europe. During the lull, I kept my own creative energies focused on developing a market for the artwork that has graced the Interspecies Newsletter and website, over the past 25 years. I considered including a contact sheet of various prints in this newsletter, but realized it would be easier, cheaper, and with better quality, if I simply put the gallery online. I hope you will take a moment to visit this gallery at:

http://interspecies.com/images/art%20prints/index.htm

The images primarily depict the energies of nature, and the communicative and perceptual flow of these energies in and out of animals and habitat. The prints are being sold at galleries in Washington and Texas, and we are currently seeking new venues to expand our market. All sales go directly to Interspecies. If you would like to own a print, or give one as a Christmas gift, we sell them mounted on foamboard at 5 by 7 inches, 8 by 10, and 13 by 19. For an upcoming November opening at the Friday Harbor Whale Museum Gallery, we will print larger sizes.



Two:

What started out as a straightforward invitation to do a few powerpoint presentations about whale communication at next summer's EXPO in Japan, has since grown into one of the largest projects we have ever produced. We are sponsored in this production by Interspecies' Japanese sister organization, ICERC. Basically, we will develop a "WhalesAlive" presence at this international Festival with its projected 15 million Japanese visitors.

Cetacean intelligence and communication will be experienced by visitors via interactive music, imagery, and the creative process itself. Seeking a hands-on way for visitors to create their own music from underwater animal sounds, we engaged one of the world's foremost producers of digital audio software, Native Instruments in Germany, to design original software for a computer kiosk. The kiosk guides visitors into the process creating their own techno beats using sounds gleaned from five whale species, two dolphin species, two seal species, walrus, fish, and lobsters. Once the music sounds good, the budding composer clicks the mouse, and the kiosk burns a CD of the music as a

souvenir to take home.

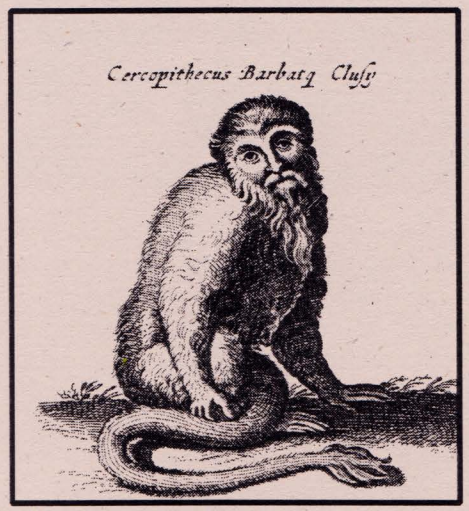
Every few days, the kiosk stewards listen to the accumulated music, choose some of the best selections, and then do a radio show of whale music over the EXPO "Earth Plaza" sound system.

There's more. As newsletter readers may recall, in 2003 we commissioned 24 composers in 8 countries to create a piece of music using the same samples as will be featured on the kiosk. The production was called *The Belly of the Whale Project*, a collaboration with greenmuseum.org.

As I write this newsletter, I am engaging several video artists to produce music videos of these completed musical works. The result will be a debut screening of these music videos of whales and dolphins on the huge "Earth Plaza" video screen over a ten day period. Subject matter runs the gamut from beautiful underwater shots of cetaceans, to a peek at the bloody dolphin drive fisheries that have become such a disgrace to Japanese culture.

Four times during EXPO, I will do a presentation focusing on the value of "WhalesAlive" in a depleted world. Like everything else Interspecies does, the message will be delivered without politics. We rely instead on the evocative power of art and music.

And two more times during EXPO, I will take the mainstage to perform a live concert of my own music based on whale sounds, accompanied by Japanese musicians.



all sketches published by Matthias Merian in 1650

Three:

As always, Interspecies gets to do this criticial but largely volunteer work only because our supporters continue to grant us a solid base of financial support. Please send in your annual contribution so we can continue to develop this project without having to stop to re-focus all our energies on fundraising. And please spread the word. Buy a picture

Now on to the newsletter. The story that follows was sent in by one of Interspecies artist-collaborators, Daniel Dancer. You can view his work, online, at:

http://www.inconcertwithnature.com/

—Jim Nollman, Sept 2004

This Magic Moment

By Jennifer Anderson

It was like many Maui mornings, the sun rising over Haleakala as we greeted our divers for the day's charter. As my captain and I explained the dive procedures to our clients, I noticed the wind blowing on Molokini, a small, crescent-shaped island that harbors a large reef. I slid through the briefing, then prompted my divers to gear up, careful to do everything right so they would feel confident with me as dive leader. The dive went well. The garden eels performed their underwater ballet, the parrot fish grazed on the coral, and the ever-elusive male flame wrasse flared their colors to defend their territory.

The three of us drifted along the outside of the reef, slowly beginning our ascent until, far below, something caught my eye. After a few moments, I made out the white shoulder patches of a manta ray in about one hundred and twenty feet of water. Mantas can be identified by the distinctive pattern on their belly, with no two rays alike. In 1992, I had been identifying the manta rays that were seen at Molokini and found that some were known, but many more were sighted only once, and then gone. They graze on plankton, which is the only reason they are not put on display in aquariums.

So there I was: a large ray beneath me and my skeptical divers behind. I tried to win the rays' confidence, so I started calling through my regulator, "Hey, come up and see me!" I had tried this before to attract the attention of whales and dolphins, who are very chatty underwater and will come sometimes just to see what the noise is about. My client divers were puzzled by my actions, and ignored me.

After a minute, the ray made a wide circular glide until she was closer to me. I kept watching as she slowly moved back and forth, rising higher, until she was directly beneath the two other divers and me. I was pleased to see them smiling.

Looking to the ray, I realized she was much bigger than what we were used to around Molokini — a good fifteen feet from wing tip to wing tip. I had not seen this animal before. There was something else odd about her. I saw deep V-shaped marks of her flesh missing from her backside. Other marks ran up and down her body. At first I thought a boat had hit her. As she came closer, now with only ten feet separating us, I saw she had fish hooks embedded in her head by her eye, with very thick fishing line running to her tail. She had rolled with the line and was wrapped head to tail about five or six times. The line had torn into her body at the back, and those were the V-shaped chunks that were missing.

I felt paralyzed. I knew wild animals in pain would never tolerate a human to inflict more pain. But I had to do something.

Forgetting about my air, my divers and where I was, I went to the manta. I moved very slowly and talked to her the whole time. When I touched her, her whole body quivered. I put both of my hands on her. I knew that she could knock me off at any time with one flick of her great wing.

When she steadied, I took out the knife that I carry on my inflator hose and lifted one of the lines. It was tight and difficult to get my finger under, almost like a guitar string. She shook, which told me to be gentle. It was obvious that the slightest pressure was painful.

As I cut through the first line, it pulled into her wounds. With one beat of her mighty wings, she dumped me and bolted away. I figured that she was gone and was amazed when she turned and came right back to me, gliding under my body. I went to work. She seemed to know it would hurt, and somehow, she also knew that I could help.I cut through one line and into the next until she had all she could take moved away, only to return in a moment or two. I allowed her to be in charge, and she always came back.

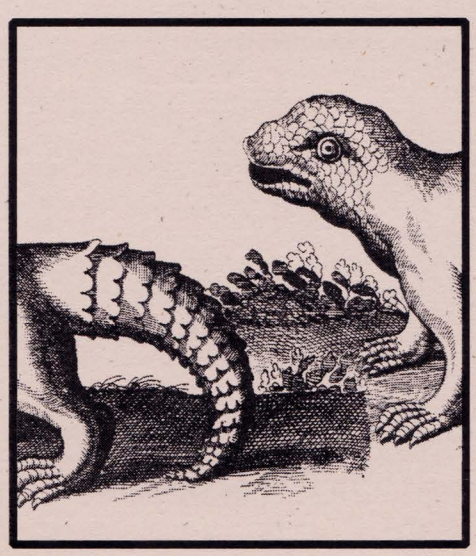
When all the lines were cut on top, I went under her to pull the lines through the wounds at the back of her body. The tissue had started to grow around them, and they were difficult to get loose. I held myself against her body, with my hand on her lower jaw. She held as motionless as she could. When it was all loose, I let her go and watched her swim in a circle. She could have gone then, and it would have all fallen away. She came back, and I went back on top of her.

The fishing hooks were still in her. One was barely hanging on, which I removed easily. The other was buried by her eye at least two inches past the barb.! Carefully, I began to take it out, hoping I wasn't damaging anything. She did open and close her eye while I worked on her, and finally, it was out. I held the hooks in one hand, while I gathered the fishing line in the other hand, my weight on the manta.

I could have stayed there forever! I was totally oblivious to everything but that moment. I loved this manta. I was so moved that she would allow me to do this to her. With my air running out, I came to my senses and pushed myself away.

At first, she stayed below me. And then, when she realized that she was free, she came to life like I never would have imagined she could. I thought she was sick and weak, since her mouth had been tied closed, and she hadn't been able to feed for however long the lines had been on her. I thought wrong! With two beats of those powerful wings, she rocketed along the wall of Molokini and then directly out to sea! I lost view of her and, remembering my divers, turned to look for them. They were right above me and had witnessed the whole event.

I kicked in the direction of my divers, whose eyes were still wide from the encounter, only to have them signal me to stop and turn around. Until this moment, the whole experience had been phenomenal, but I could explain it.



Now, the moment turned magical.

I turned and saw her slowly gliding toward me. With barely an effort, she approached me and stopped, her wing just touching my head. I looked into her round, dark eye, and she looked deeply into me. I felt a rush of something that so overpowered me, I have yet to find the words to describe it, except a warm and loving flow of energy from her into me. She stayed with me a moment. Then, she lifted her wing over my head and was gone. A manta thank-you.

Sadly, I have not seen her since that day, and I am still looking. For the longest time, though my wetsuit was tattered and torn, I would not change it because I thought she wouldn't recognize me. I call to every manta I see, and they almost always acknowledge me in some way. One day, though, it will be her. She'll hear me and pause, remembering the human she trusted to relieve her pain, and she'll come. At least that is how it happens in my dreams.

Breakup Of The North Pole

From Dirk Dunning
August 15, 2004
http://www.rense.com/general56/break.htm

I am stunned almost to speechlessness. What I report here is easily one of the most astounding events of our time, and, yet, nowhere is the story reported on the news!

The northeast passage across the Siberian polar ice is open. The glaciers on Ellesmere Island and the northern and northeastern shores of Greenland are collapsing within a matter of days. The channel between Greenland and Ellesmere Isalnd is open. And only about 250 miles of ice remains on the north shore of Greenland connecting it to the polar ice. And that is breaking up.

Vast stretches of polar ice are pulverized and floating free in the Arctic ocean. Thousands of square miles of ice are pulverized and on the edge of breaking up into a billion ice bergs.

An immense rent has formed in the ice north of Queen Victoria Island. An even larger tear reaches up from Siberia poking at the north pole itself. The entire north shore of Akaska is ice free, as is all of the northern Siberian shore—all the way to the New Siberian Islands and beyond. The last of the ice blocking the Northwest passage at the east end of Queen Elizabeth Island is breaking up.

In short, the north pole is falling apart. And some still claim that global warming is not real.

Within weeks, the ~~re~~-freeze should begin. Depending on how long it is before that happens, massive changes may occur at the pole before the freeze. The polar ice may well break free from land on ALL sides!!

Japan Whaling News

Sent in by John Frizell of Greenpeace International.

RE: Japan's vote recruitment for the International Whaling Commission continues. On August 27, 2004, the daily press briefing of Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs included this notice:

The Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs Kazunori Tanaka will visit Africa, specifically the Republic of Uganda, the Republic of Malawi and the Republic of Madagascar. He will begin his visit on 29 August and will come back on 9 September. The purpose of Parliamentary Secretary Tanaka's visit to these countries is a follow-up to the Third Tokyo International Conference on African Development, hosted by Japan last September.

Parliamentary Secretary Tanaka will exchange views with government officials of the countries to be visited this time whose presidents participated in the conference and will visit places where Japan's economic cooperation is actually in action. He will also try to promote cooperative relations in the international arena on such issues as having these countries obtain a seat on the International Whaling Commission.

Madagascar Whaling News

Sainte-Marie, Madagascar, Aug 26, 2004

The shallow and warm waters off a remote port on this island are alive with the sound of hundreds of humpback whales, who escape the rigors of the Antarctic winter and come here every year to breed and croon. The whales have given rise to a major tourist industry. An island of only 19,000 inhabitants off the northeastern coast of Madagascar, Sainte-Marie has more than 50 hotels. Not surprisingly, local authorities are determined to protect both the singing cetaceans and their own livelihood, but they say the Madagascar government is coming under strong pressure to allow the docile whales to be hunted. They see developing the tourist industry as the best way of saving the humpbacks.

Local authorities and hoteliers this year have organized several events to popularize the humpbacks, including a four-day whale festival, starting Wednesday. The hoteliers also fund the activities of a French research association, Megaptera, which seeks to identify and follow the whales on an annual basis.

"The people of Sainte-Marie have to understand the importance of this sanctuary to resist the pressure of Japan and others," said Valerie Collin, the coordinator of Megaptera.

"For the time being, Madagascar supports the international moratorium on hunting in force since 1986," said Didier Cabocel, president of Saint-Marie's whale commission, "Above all, because hunting whales is not at all traditional here. But the hunting nations like Japan and Norway are putting enormous economic pressure on the Madagascar authorities."

Collin said local authorities for the moment seem willing to defend the humpbacks, "but with these economic pressures, we shouldn't dream too much – the whales are really in danger here."

Doctor Dolittle's Delusion

By Donald G. McNeil Jr.
Reviewed by Marc Bekoff

One night, Stephen R. Anderson, a Yale professor of linguistics and psychology, noticed his cat clawing the rug near the door. His wife got up, and opened the door, then translated: "The cat's saying, 'I want to go out.' "

Do we conclude, Dr. Anderson asks, that the cat talks?

The answer, he argues, is no — although, as a human, he could say the same thing by rolling his eyes and replying sarcastically,

"Yeah, sure."

Dr. Anderson is the author of "Doctor Dolittle's Delusion," to be published by Yale University Press in November. The book basically argues that if kindly John Dolittle was hearing voices, they weren't coming from Gub-Gub the pig.

The idea that animals have all-but-human mental lives, emotions and powers of communication has become increasingly fashionable, after centuries in which such notions were considered absurd. Since the 1970's, as animal behaviorists have trained apes to make requests by stringing gestures or ideograms together and acousticians have detected that both whales and elephants make subsonic calls, suspicions have arisen that animals have more to say than humans realized. And this year, German researchers reported in the journal Science that Rico, the collie, could fetch 200 objects by name, and learn the name of a new object by inference if it was in a group of other objects that he already knew.

Dr. Anderson, however, warns against considering any of these behaviors "language." Rico is a clever dog, he says, but what he does "is well within the bounds of what we know animals can do. "Dogs in particular have evolved to pick up clues from humans. Pointing at an object, for example, means nothing to an ape, a parrot or even a wolf, but a dog realizes that the item at a distance from the finger is what a human is naming. Prodded by humans, Dr. Anderson argues, animals may learn to memorize symbols or sounds, and to think abstractly. But those talents do not match the complexity of any spoken or sign language. They are more like the limited vocabulary of commands transmitted by baseball coaches.

"Chimps do, after a lot of training, learn 200 or more signs," Dr. Anderson said in an interview from New Zealand, where he is teaching this year. "But they seem to top out after a few years. Kids' vocabularies just go on expanding." Children also perceive that sounds can be joined to form words and concepts into sentences, he said. It is not clear that animals do. "You can teach pigeons to push a sequence of 6 or 7 buttons to get seeds," Dr. Anderson said, "but that's not language."

To linguists, languages are not lists of words, but frames governed by syntax, the art that gives different meanings to "The murderer believed Mary to be John's mother," and "Mary believed John's mother to be the murderer."

Dr. Anderson concedes that animals communicate, often in detail. Waggling bee dances indicate the direction and distance to a trove of pollen, and monkeys and squirrels have different alarm calls for different predators. Animals can even fool each other with sounds. A shrike-tanager may give a false alarm call to scare other shrike-tanagers away from food it wants. But birds cannot explain the trick, bees do not reminisce about last year's honey and apes do not ask their language teachers why they are captives.

The closest animals come to syntax, Dr. Anderson argues, is that some West African monkeys emit a low "boom" before an alarm call that — judging by the reaction of monkeys hearing it — lowers the threat level. That is, "boom-leopard" seems to mean "maybe a leopard around, but not close."

Dr. Emily Sue Savage-Rumbaugh, who has worked with apes for 25 years, strongly disagrees with Dr. Anderson. Some bonobos she works with at Georgia State University, she said, have been talked to by humans since birth and have watched their parents learn charts of symbols. By pointing to the right ones, Kanzi, the best among the bonobos, can form sentences like "Sue chase Kanzi" and "Kanzi chase Sue," or they can hear and interpret the English words "Get the tomato that is in the microwave" and go fetch the correct tomato while ignoring others. The apes can even indicate that they are happy or sad or in pain, Dr. Savage-Rumbaugh said, and can refer to the past by reminding researchers of rewards promised the day before.

Francine Patterson, who has worked for nearly 30 years with Koko, the gorilla, said Koko could "in some respects, depending on what you are looking at, speak as well as a 5-year-old child." Koko can modulate a vocabulary of about 1,000 signs by raising her eyebrows to indicate questions, by signing at others to indicate agreement, and making other moves "that would be described as grammatical" by users of deaf sign languages," Dr. Patterson said.

On the other side of the equation, linguists have been accused of moving the bar on their definition of language ever higher, so that it can never be met. They will always deny that animals can talk, Dr. Savage-Rumbaugh argues, "because it doesn't fit comfortably in their view of the universe."

Dr. Anderson replies that he has "no desire to deny speech even to the cockroach," but doesn't think nonhumans have the potential.

Commentary on the Bekoff Review

by Jim Nollman

Doctor Dolittle's Dilemma says little about the language potential of whales and dolphins.

Yet there is evidence of a true animal language emerging from within marine mammal science, especially from Moscow's Shirshoff Institute, where bio-acousticians are anaylzing beluga whale calls. In one recent paper by the Shirshoff team, they demonstrated that beluga whales employ at least 24 phonemes to compose words in what appears to be an expression of true language. I know about this study first hand, because I participated in their White Sea study over three year's time.

Beyond the Shirshoff study, *Doctor Dolittle's Delusion* is woefully anthropocentric. "Language", as the book chooses to define it, is really human language. The few of us who are actively studying whale communication, grow weary of expert authors who lack the imagination to recognize that the clever thing we do with our mouths is just a human-specific subset of a greater communication category called language.

One caveat. What I describe below is speculative, although soundly based on empirical evidence. Because it is a hypothesis, Doctor McNeil would surely declare that nothing I describe changes his mind. As always, what science can not contain, does not fully exist within science.

Regard the standard audio graph called a spectrograph, with frequency displayed as a y axis and time as an x axis. Studying a spectrograph of the human voice, we conclude that human language is ovewhelmingly time-dependent. I could not vocalize this paragraph in one second. But I could speak it in any of several different frequency ranges, and a listener would certainly understand all the ideas presented. So to be accurate about the author's own definition, he is actually concluding that no animal employ s human language with its clear emphasis on resolving content via time, quite as precisely as humans do so. No big revelation there, especially for any of us who study other forms of communication within nature.

Belugas produce a dense, multilayered, variety of calls that make use of an extremely broad band of frequencies — ten times wider than humans can physically hear — and yet vocalized in time spans as short as one/hundredth of a second. They also appear to control the interference patterns across this wide frequency spectrum. Humans hear interference patterns (for one example) as the beats that occur while tuning one guitar string to another one.

Adapting the graphing technique called wavelets to study cetacean calls, Interspecies consultant Mark Fischer has commented that he has watched these beats modulate in frames of hundredths of a second.

But that's the just start of this remarkable form of communication that humans do not (and may never) have the physical or technological apparatus to hear, let alone comprehend. The well-known dolphin call described by John Lilly as "the creaky door sound" is actually comprised of hundreds of these individual beats. Yet the human ear can not resolve them as beats, but only as one continuous sound.

Unlike visually-reliant humans, toothed whales primarily perceive the world via echolocation. Echolocation both transmits and resolves as beats. If an echolocating species were to develop language, it would likely be based, not on time like human language, but on a symbolic derivation of these broadband beats.

A beat language would probably convey its messages through sonic imaging or holograms as much as through phonemes and sentences as we humans have developed to fit our own sensual receptors. At the moment, there are formidable

technical problems for humans to clearly record wild beluga calls. One might well ask how can humans ever learn to interpret a language based on echolocation? Imagine a language transmitting its meaning through individual beats being transmitted at one/hundredth of a second. And each one of these primary beats likewise contains thousands of second-level interference beats. Although we may never understand the meaning of these calls, we already know that the animals do call, and then listen to another animal respond, then respond in kind. This process suggests a discussion among vocalizing parties.

It also takes a leap of imagination to grasp how much information can be conveyed using this sophisticated beat structure. Think of it in terms of information transmitted in a split second by a broadband internet connection versus a modem. Some beluga calls are so incredibly wide-frequency, with so many beats modulating at any single moment, that I like to describe the potential content of a one-second whale call, as containing an entire "feature film's" worth of information.

Souls of the Sea

Dolphins, Whales, and Human Destiny [Scott Taylor, Frog Ltd, 2003]

Scott Taylor's book is basically an account of the many ways humans have been touched by dolphins throughout history, and includes much about cultural imagery, religious symbology, story, and even how we have played with dolphins over the centuries. He adds a subtle overlay of meaning to this history lesson by often insisting that the dolphins, themselves, were (and are) somehow in control of many of these relations. If you like your dolphins mystical, you'll enjoy the book. If not, you may conclude as I do, that people who grant extrasensory powers to dolphins give me no extra reason to admire cetaceans as creatures of wonder and delight.

Taylor often grants to the dolphins behavior an intentionality which the events he describes do not need or warrant. This subtext is exemplified by what he refers to as the "delphic wave", variously defined as "the gentle influence of the cetacean presence [on humans] and "the influence of dolphins over human development."

Like many other writers, Taylor describes dolphins as highly energized, intelligent beings of grace, who live together in social structures that are both cooperative and free of internal violence. But then he takes a spiritual leap to declare that dolphins serve humans as kind of oceanic counselor "to prepare humans for the next level of life." The clear suggestion here is that we humans can not (or do not know how to) comprehend this next level, by ourselves, because we are caught in a profane mindset and lack energetic soulfulness and cosmic consciousness.

This is a very different tone than simply gushing about dolphins as graceful and playful creatures. It is even different than a statement pointing out that dolphins have soemtimes served humans as totem guides. Taylor's dolphin admiration is more spiritual than it is experiential or historical.

In my years of attending cetacean conferences, I have often heard people talk about dolphins as a newage demigod. This discussion is prevalent enough that I devoted an entire chapter to the phenomenon in my own book, *The Charged Border*. I see no point in arguing either historically or even logically to attempt to disprove such beliefs. They simply exist. The people who hold them truly do love the dolphins, and do not willingly do them any harm. Some of the people who subscribe to this newsletter have expressed this same dolphin love.

What I wish to consider here, if only briefly, is if the dolphins themselves are served by this spiritual cetology that depicts them as enlightened beings. Let's consider two different examples that confront this issue of intentionality.

First, a rather extreme example, not described in Taylor's book, but pertinent to the central issue, and lifted as a slice from my own memories. Years ago, when I worked at Iki island trying to stop the needless slaughter of thousands of dolphins by Japanese fishermen, I had a conversation with a visiting journalist who insisted that the dolphins were actively letting themselves get caught. In his view, the dolphins *had* to be complicit, because if not, they could easily escape by jumping over thenet to freedom. This man went on to tell me that the dolphins were letting themselves be slaughtered to create a powerful image and metaphor about the dying oceans for all of humankind to see. In other words, the dolphins were media artists cooking up headlines for the New York Times.

He then argued that my own task of stopping the killing was counterproductive, and that I ought to help the dolphins by promoting their story in the media. Having witnessed the slaughter firsthand, I found the man's premise offensive.

And another example, this time from Taylor's book.

Joe and Rosie were two dolphins used in a captive lab experiment. In the late 1980's, a group of concerned folks organized to "untrain" and release the two dolphins back to the ocean. I knew the project well, and recall the team's strategic decision to follow all of the formidable government regulations, rather than simply letting the dolphins go free. By doing so, they quickly learned that it is far more difficult in the USA to release a formerly captive dolphin, than it is to capture one in the first place.

After months and months of "untraining" the two animals, the gates were finally opened. Joe and Rosie swam toward the ocean, but then briefly returned to the channel before making their final exit. Taylor interjects his own opinion that, by turning a moment, the dolphins were trying to say that they wanted to remain among "human families...but the humans had decided to ignore them."

This statement was pointed out to me by one of the key people involved in the release. She was as offended by Taylor's glib description of an onerous two year process, as I had been offended by the journalist at Iki Island.

My conclusion is this. A book written by a devotee who perceives the dolphins as gurus, needs to be taken with the same grain of salt as a devotee's book about a human guru. It is certainly of cultural value, and Taylor's story of the ancient history of human/dolphin relations is enough reason to buy the book. What you will discover, is a literary and historically fullsome account, that displays a bit too much of the author and not quite enough of the dolphins as they actually live.